



RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF ST. ANDREWS

POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and standards to ensure the appropriate use, conduct and management of social media and other communications platforms on behalf of the R.M. of St. Andrews.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT:

The R.M. of St. Andrews website is the primary source of online information exchange with the public and is the Municipality's official internet presence. Other communications platforms such as social media are also used in delivering effective and accessible communication about municipal news, programs and services to the community and also allows for direct engagement with audiences.

3.0 SCOPE:

This policy shall apply to all R.M. of St. Andrews employees and any person who has been retained and/or engaged to act on behalf of the R.M. of St. Andrews, who makes public statements on the municipality's social media sites and communications platforms.

4.0 POLICY CONTENT:

4.1 Acceptable Use by the Municipality in Communicating Through Social Media

i. Purpose and Use

Social media should be used as a communication tool for the intent of enhancing communication from the Municipality to the public about programs and services for such purposes as:

- Raising awareness and sharing information
- Recruiting volunteers and employees
- Promoting municipal events, programs and services
- Increasing access to information for specific audiences

- Where possible, Municipal social media accounts should link back to the Municipal website for the purpose of downloading forms, documents and providing specific or additional information

ii. Conduct

Anyone posting information on behalf of the Municipality will conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner and must adhere to the following:

- Post accurate, credible and consistent information and links that are consistent with the Municipality's information, messages, brand identity and policies. Department Heads are responsible for the accuracy and relevancy of any information forwarded to the Social Media Account Administrator for posting.
- Strive for transparency and openness.
- Publicly correct any information in a timely manner that has been communicated and found to be in error, using the same platform it was produced in.
- Post content in a manner that is discreet, does not disclose confidential information or release personal or corporate/municipal information, without prior consent. Social Media content must take *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* into consideration.
- Must not engage in offensive language, respond in a confrontational manner, or post content that is not professional or that contravenes Municipal policies and the R.M. of St. Andrews Code of Conduct Policies.
- Must not use corporate/municipal accounts to express personal opinions or further personal agendas.
- Ensure proper protocols and permissions are obtained for posting any copyrighted material (including documents, websites, logos, images).
- Ensure security of social media accounts is maintained, including password and login information.

Where possible, each social media account or communications platform used by the Municipality should contain any necessary disclaimers such as advising visitors to the site that third party comments are not official communications of the R.M. of St. Andrews. It should also be noted that the R.M.'s website is the official destination for municipal information and that social media accounts are regularly monitored Monday – Friday during regular business hours.

iii. Sharing/Re-Posting Content

When sharing or re-posting content from a social media account that is not owned by the R.M. of St. Andrews, these guidelines must be followed:

Content that includes external links:

- a) Connects the public with information and services provided by various levels of government or government-funded agencies or boards in Canada.
- b) Provides further information on subject matter found on the Municipality's website. Such information must be provided by an official and/or accredited source.

- c) A Municipality affiliated organization, service club or registered charity (direct partnership by way of funding, sponsorship, staff resources or in-kind contributions).
- d) Any organization approved by Council.

Content promoting events:

- a) Organized or funded by another level of government.
- b) Organized by a government-funded agency or board.
- c) Organized by a R.M. of St. Andrews affiliated organization/group.
- d) Funded in full, or in part, by the R.M. of St. Andrews.
- e) Sponsored by the R.M. of St. Andrews.
- f) Organized by a registered charitable organization operating within the R.M. of St. Andrews.
- g) Organized by a service club operating within the R.M. of St. Andrews performing work that benefits R.M. of St. Andrews residents.
- h) Organized by a business improvement area or Chamber of Commerce located in the municipality for general promotional purposes.
- i) Located in a facility owned by the R.M. of St. Andrews.

iv. Records Management

Posts/user content deemed to be Official Records must be retained and purged according to the Municipality's Record Retention Policy and comply with appropriate sections of *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

4.2 Public Conduct and RM Response

i. Public Conduct

Visitors to the Municipality's social media pages should be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a communication platform and information-sharing tool between the Municipality.

A link to the R.M. of St. Andrews Social Media and Communications Policy will be posted on the respective social media pages where possible and disclaimers are to be included that the Municipality reserves the right to remove inappropriate, inaccurate, irrelevant or unproductive content (i.e. posts and comments) from social media accounts. If the user continues to post inappropriate, irrelevant, inaccurate or unproductive content, the Municipality may ban/block the user from the site at the discretion of the CAO or designate or account administrator.

Comments, posts, or articles containing the following content will not be allowed:

- Comments not typically related to the topic and/or issue being commented upon;
- Account spamming, trolling or overposting;
- Posts that are meant to solicit sales, products or goods and services;
- Profane, aggressive, hateful, defamatory, insulting, rude, abusive or violent language or content;
- Content that includes links to objectionable material;
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
- Information that may compromise the privacy, safety or security of the Municipality, public or public systems;

- Comments or posts that includes inaccurate material or misrepresent facts as known by the Corporation;
- Comments or posts that impersonate or misrepresent someone else, including public figures, Municipal Staff or Municipal Officials;
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

ii. **RM Response to Negative Social Media Posts**

Comments of a Positive Nature

- The social media account administrator may respond to positive comments as deemed appropriate.

Postings of Inquiries

- The public should be advised to contact the Municipality directly via email or submit the request through the service tracker system if a post relates to an inquiry regarding a certain issue.

Postings of a Negative Nature or Demeaning Remarks

- The post will be removed by the Municipality and the user may be banned from the site for inappropriate activity and comments.

Comments on Posts

- The Municipality reserves the right to eliminate the ability to post comments by the public on any or all posts.

5.0 POLICY COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated internally with staff and posted on the R.M. of St. Andrews website. This policy will also be linked to the municipality's social media platforms and any other municipal communications platforms.

6.0 COMPLIANCE

In cases of policy violation, the CAO or designate has the authority to allow or disallow any and all comments and can suspend any members of the public that are posting inappropriate comments or material. Employees and Council members may also be subject to discipline for violating this policy.

7.0 LEGAL

This Social Media and Communications Policy will adhere to all legislated acts including, but not limited to, *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, *The Municipal Employee Code of Conduct*, *the Council Code of Conduct*, *The Municipal Act*, *The Municipal Council Conflict of Interest Act* and *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act*.

The Municipality is a Respectful Workplace as per R.M. of St. Andrews Policy No. GEN-31. Any communications deemed to be discriminatory, harassing or containing aggressive, abusive or derogatory comments directed to a member of Council or employee of the R.M. of St. Andrews will not be tolerated.